

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

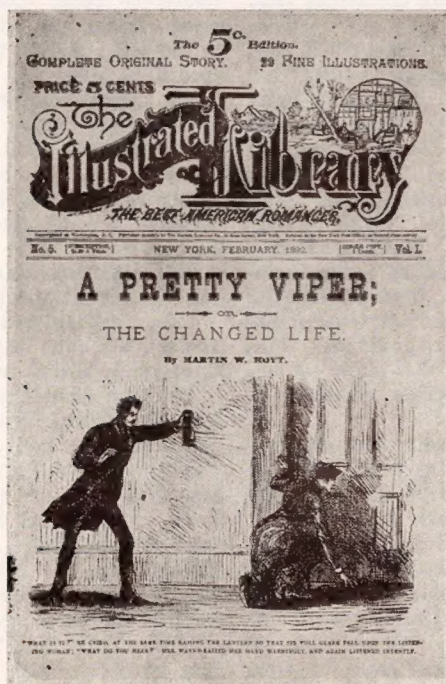
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Whole No. 465

## Land of the Heroes

By John T. Dizer



### DIME NOVEL SKETCHES NO. 138

#### THE ILLUSTRATED LIBRARY

Publisher: Nickel Library Co., 24 Rose St., New York, N. Y. Issues: 9 (highest number seen). Dates: October 1888 to June 1889. Schedule of Issue: Monthly. Size: 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ x8 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Pages: 24. Price: 10c. Illustrations, black and white cover illustration and numerous inside illustrations. No. 5 has 22 illustrations.

NOTE: A 5c Edition was published beginning in October 1891. No change in format except for "The 5c Edition" printed at the top above the masthead. Speculation is that 24 issues were published until September 1891 and a month later it was reissued at the lowered price of 5c. However only two issues, Nos. 5 and 9 have been examined. If anyone can shed further light on the number of issues, I would appreciate hearing from him.

## Land of the Heroes

By John T. Dizer

Where do heroes come from? More specifically, where do the folk heroes of the American series books come from? Before any gentle reader says, "who cares," let me hasten to suggest that this is a significant social concern. For if we accept the premise, as all right-thinking patriots must, that what this country needs is more Tom Swifts, Dick Prescotts and Frank Merriwells it follows as the night the day that a knowledge of their origins may provide insight on the forces that produce heroes.

At one time it was this writers contention that the breeding place for heroes—pardon the expression—was central New York. A strong case can be made. Many of James Fenimore Cooper's heroes lived in the Otsego Lake region. If we accept Henry Nash Smith's contention in "Virgin Land" that fictional Wild Western heroes were in general modelled after Cooper's Leatherstocking, then all frontier heroes can be claimed, at least indirectly, as New York products. This may be stretching the claim a bit, but more direct concrete examples abound. A few follow:

W. O. Stoddard wrote what is probably his most popular book, "Salttillo Boys," about the boys of a private school in Fayette Park in Syracuse.

Oliver Optic found many of his heroes in central New York. "Switch Off" takes place near "Hitaca" and "Ucayga," vaguely reminiscent of Ithaca and Cayuga and other books of the "Lake Shore Series" have the same locale. The Toppleton Institute and the Wimbleton Institute are prominent in these series.

Richard Grant, hero of "In School and Out," also by Optic, came from

Woodville, New York, which was located on the Hudson River, but he developed his character at the Tunbrook Military Institute. Since he left Woodville at 9:00 a.m. and arrived before night, it is possible to infer a central New York location for the Institute. (p. 108). This reasoning is buttressed by much internal evidence including a description of a summer camping trip of ten days in which the boys covered over a hundred miles in relatively rural country and a comment about "the other end of Tunbrook Lake, distant ten miles by road." (pp. 161, 163.)

We might note in passing that one of the first things the establishment did to Richard upon his arrival at the Institute was to confiscate "several yellow-covered novels."

"Can't I have my books . . . asked Richard."

"No, sir; you cannot. Such trash as that is not fit for boys to read."

Poor Richard had his character developed the hard way, cut off from enlightening literature.

Military Academies obviously flourished in central New York and one of the most prominent was Putnam Hall. Captain Victor Putnam "purchased a beautiful plot of ground on Cayuga Lake, in New York State, and there he built Putnam Hall . . ." ("Putnam Hall Rivals," p. 3.) Meanwhile Anderson Rover had purchased a farm "of two hundred acres in the Mohawk Valley of New York State" and his nephews had moved in with him. They proved too much for the aged agriculturist and he shipped them off to Captain Putnam to be tamed down. Little did he know. The boys took the train from "Oak Run," nearest town to the farm,

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in the morning and arrived at Ithaca by 3 p.m. There they were to "take a small steamer which ran from that city to the head of the lake, stopping at Cedarville, the nearest village to Putnam Hall." ("Rover Boys at School," p. 47.)

The Swift Manufacturing Corporation, of course, is located in central New York. "Mr. Swift and his son lived . . . on the outskirts of the village of Shopton, in New York State. The village was near a large body of water, which I shall call Lake Carlopa . . ." ("Tom Swift and His Motor-Cycle," p. 9.) It has been recently demonstrated that Hammondsport, N. Y. quite possibly corresponds with Shopton and that Keuka Lake is Lake Carlopa.

Phil Bradley and the "Mountain Boys" came from Brewster, N. Y. "It lay nestled among the hills of New York." ("Phil Bradley at the Wheel," p. 14.) Phil owned a "large mountain estate of wild land" in "one of the loneliest parts of the great Adirondack regions." His home town, though, is "further south, though still in the uplands." ("Phil Bradley and the Mountain Boys," p. 200.) An interesting incident in "Phil Bradley's Mountain Boys" finds them rescuing one "John Newton" who admits finally that his real name is Alwyn Merriwell. The connection between this Merriwell and Harton Merriwell, father of the noted Frank, has not been established, but it seems probable that any mother who would name a boy "Alwyn" would be equally likely to name another, "Harton."

Bloomfield, Frank Merriwell's home town, can from occasional references, be placed in central New York. Quoting E. T. LeBlanc, leading authority on Frank, "However in a few cases we can geographically place Bloomfield possibly in central New York State. At one point Frank left New Haven and traveled to Springfield, Mass. to meet a train coming in from the west bringing his guardian, Professor Scotch, to meet him. They evidently met half way. In another story while Frank is in Bangor, mention is made that Bloomfield is 800 miles a-

way. Assuming that 800 miles is by road, this would put Bloomfield somewhere in New York State, tying in with the earlier geographical identification. There are many towns near Bloomfield, including Wellsburg which is tied in to a summer resort in the mountains not far away. This could be the Adirondacks . . ."

Blake Stewart of "The Moving Picture Boys" (Appleton) lived with his mother's brother, " . . . who had a small farm in Fayetteburg, in the central part of New York State." ("The Moving Picture Boys," p. 22.)

It would seem that if Frank Merriwell, Tom Swift and the Rovers were all from central New York, that this area could really be called the "Home of the Heroes." Unfortunately, further research developed that many or even most of our heroes did not come from central New York. Even the Rovers were originally from New York City and moved back there after their retirement from roving. The author's search over many wasted years has turned up evidence about the origins of a number of our heroes which indicates a wide range of backgrounds. In some cases it must be admitted that the hero's homes are notably peripatetic, either by design or by accident. It is often necessary to use an educated inference to determine a logical location. Inferences and geographical substantiating data for a number of our boy heroes follow:

Although central New York may be too limiting, it is obvious that many heroes have origins in some part of the state or in the adjoining state of New Jersey.

"The Radio Boys" (Chapman) hail from Clintonia. "Clintonia was . . . in an Eastern state, about seventy-five miles from New York City." ("Radio Boys First Wireless," p. 21.) Newark, New Jersey is "nearly a hundred miles from here." (p. 34.) In "The Radio Boys Aiding the Snowbound" they leave Clintonia to skate up the Shagary river to a lumber camp and "We can make it in a couple of days." (p. 50.) The camp is on the Canadian border. "They (the lumberjacks) had come from Canada, as the border was



not far away." (p. 93). This would apparently put Clintonia in Northern New York. On the other hand, in "The Radio Boys at Ocean Point," the ocean resort "... was only a pleasant spin of about forty miles..." (p. 87) and the ocean is a long way from the Adirondacks. Arcs drawn 400 miles from Pittsburgh, 75 miles from New York City, 100 miles from Newark and intersecting 40 miles from the Atlantic coast might even lead one to suspect Connecticut. The only unquestionable fact is that the boys came from within a radius of 75 miles of New York City.

"The Radio Boys" of Clintonia may be a little confused as to where they live but "The Radio Boys" (Breckenridge) know exactly. "All three boys were sons of wealthy parents, with country estates near the far end of Long Island." ("The Radio Boys on the Mexican Border," p. 4.) It is nice to find such solid facts.

"The Radio Boys" (Duffield) on the other hand were Northern New York Staters. "The three boys were seated in Cub's room at the Perry home, ... in the City of Oswego, on the shore of Lake Ontario." ("Radio Boys in the Thousand Islands," p. 8.)

"Don Sturdy ... had been born and brought up in Hillville, a thriving town in an Eastern state, about fifty miles from New York" ("Don Sturdy in the Tombs of Gold," p. 12.) Here again specifics are lacking, but it is suspected that Hillville is in New York State, north of New York City. In "Don Sturdy and the Head Hunters" we find our heroes taking a train for Chicago (p. 68.) Hillville is apparently on a main train line and they do not have to go through New York City. The supposition is that they were on the New York Central and went North to Albany and then West. On the other hand, in "Don Sturdy in the Land of Volcanoes" they took a train to New York City first and then "transferred to a transcontinental flyer," on the way to San Francisco (p. 56.) A possible clincher to the New York State argument occurs in "Don Sturdy Across the North Pole" where we find this comment: "Cheap

sports from the city," remarked Brick. "Wonder what they're doing up here?" (p. 7.) Up infers Hillville to be north of New York City.

The Mortimer Hamilton family gets around as does their home town of Hamilton Corners although both seem to be based in New York. Dick Hamilton of the "Dick Hamilton Series" by Howard Garis is a well-known millionaire, "and the only son of Mortimer Hamilton of Hamilton Corners, in New York State." ("Dick Hamilton's Airship," p. 14.) In "Dick Hamilton's Cadet Days" we find "... of Hamilton Corners, not far from New York," (p. 17) which is pretty definite, but in "Dick Hamilton's Steam Yacht" "Dick and his bulldog took a train for Hamilton Corners, a fair-sized town in one of our middle western states." (p. 16.) Mr. Garis often seems a little vague about geography and it is doubtful if his heroes and their homes were as movable as it may appear. In general, it seems to be established that Hamilton Corners is in the northeastern part of New York State. In "Dick Hamilton's Touring Car" the trip from New York City to his home "... was accomplished without accident, an early morning start enabling them to arrive shortly before dark," (p. 67) and on their tour to the West it took four days to drive from Hamilton Corners to Buffalo. An interesting comment or two about Dick Hamilton and his friends' habit of messing up the landscape appears in "Dick Hamilton's Touring Car." "We don't have many dishes to wash," and he tossed from the window of the car the wooden plates from which they had dined." "... the boys had decided that ... they would use the wooden plates, that could be thrown away after each meal." (p. 107) "... they started off again, leaving a pile of wooden plates behind them as a souvenir of their stop." (p. 109.) Such actions seem out of keeping for well-bred millionaires but just possibly times have changed since 1913 when Dick was active.

The other Hamilton family, as chronicled in the "Flying Boys Series" by Edward Ellis is established in



New Jersey. "The hotel register told me that you are Harvey Hamilton, from Mootsport, New Jersey . . ." ("The Flying Boys in the Sky," p. 154.) "Harvey was the son of a wealthy merchant, whose business took him to New York every week-day morning . . . His elder brother Dick was a student in Yale" (p. 92) He also had a mother and sister Mildred. Interestingly enough, Harvey's closest friend is Bohunkus Johnson, a black boy "who was the bound boy of a neighboring farmer." (p. 28.) "The fact that they were of different races had no effect upon their mutual regard." It must be admitted, however, that in the matter of intelligence and courage "Bunk" doesn't come off too well. We know of no connection between the two Hamilton families although they may well be relatives.

Another New York group is the "Bungalow Boys" (Forester) who attended Audubon Academy which ". is situated on the west bank of the Hudson, not far above historic West Point." ("The Bungalow Boys," p. 6.)

"The Outdoor Chums" (Allen) seem to have been from either New York or New Jersey. "Frank Langdon . . . having lived up in Maine knew about all there was to know about the tricks of campers; . . ." ("The Outdoor Chums," p. 12.) If they had been New Englanders they would have known you always go DOWN to Maine. They plan to "go camping where muskrats, coons, some mink and even an otter" have been trapped and are "planning an outing . . . back of the lumber camps at the head of the lake." (p. 2.) New York is most probable.

Several of Captain Bonehill's heroes have New York origins. ". . . we had left the Bronxville Military Academy in Upper New York State . ." ("When Santiago Fell," p. 1.) "He was going over two hundred miles from home . . ." (to New York City) with references to iceboating, Lakeview Academy and the lake which point towards central New York. ("Young Carsmen of Lakeview," p. 142.) It must be admitted that several of the Bonehill heroes also have other back-

grounds as in "A Sailor Boy With Dewey" where the hero, Oliver Raymond, states, "My father, Samuel Raymond, was a rich merchant of San Francisco . . ." (p. 3) and "Pioneer Boys of the Gold Fields" where Mark Radley lived in Philadelphia.

Many of Alger's heroes come from New York, some from the city and some from small towns outside New York City. For just one example, in "Tom Turner's Legacy," our hero at "Hillsboro, New York" and "yet we are only thirty miles distant." (from New York City) (pp. 179, 182.)

Bloomsburg, home of the "Bird Boys" (Langworthy) is apparently also in New York. The boys "travelled down to the trying-out grounds on Long Island." (p. 17.) Their father is referred to as "the well-known aviator and balloonist, Professor Bird, once of Cornell." (p. 73.)

Another famous aviator of a later date, Andy Lane of "Fifteen Days in the Air" fame, hailed from Hillside, not far from Mineola, Long Island. (p. 5.)

The "Boy Aviators" (Lawton) Frank and Harry Chester, were "among the most famous graduates the Agassiz High School on Washington Heights had turned out . . ." ("The Boy Aviators in Nicaragua," p. 9.)

The "Dreadnought Boys" (Lawton) come from ". . . Lambs' Corners, a remote village in the Catskill mountains." ("The Dreadnought Boys On Battle Practice," p. 6.)

Hilton Academy, scene of Barbour's "For the Honor of the School" is another of the many fine schools of New York state. We note that the cross country course ". . . then bore away south along the bank of the Hudson River. (p. 6.) This does not mean that Barbour's heroes all lived in New York. Indeed in "Four Afoot" which takes place on Long Island, we find that Tom Ferris comes from Chicago, Dan Speede hails from New York, Nelson Tilford lives in Boston and Bob Hethington is from Portland, Maine. Barbour covers all bases.

An unsolved mystery, at least as far as is known, is the location of Gridley, home of Dick Prescott and



company, heroes of the "Grammar School Boys" Series, "High School Boys" Series, "Annapolis" Series, etc. etc. It is obviously in the north. In "The Grammar School Boys Snowbound," this is apparent. It is obviously rural. "... we have 16 miles to go to our first camp at the second lake in the Cheney Forest." ("The High School Boys' Fishing Trip," p. 36.) In "Dick Prescott's First Year at West Point," we find the statement, "On their way to New York..." indicating either that they had come from outside the state or a reference to New York City. (p 14) Later on Greg Holmes was allowed 3 or 4 days for a "hurried trip home for a... funeral." Since he went by train, Gridley was obviously some distance away. In "Dick Prescott's Third Year At West Point" one of the "wild indians" says, "I own a farm on the east end of Long Island," and apparently the inference is that Long Island is well known to his hearers. Later on Dick and Greg leave Gridley by train in the morning and "Late in the afternoon the chums arrived in New York." (p. 96.) It becomes obvious Hancock means New York City when he says New York. Since the boys stayed at a hotel there and took a steamboat up the Hudson, it appears that they came from the west rather than the north. An 8 hour trip logically would include northwest Pennsylvania, southwest New York or possibly Ohio. Just to confuse the issue, however, in "The High School Captain of the Team" Greg says, "Mind my running up there with you?" referring to West Point, and says later, "And we went up to the state capital yesterday..." (pp. 241, 242) Neither Albany, Harrisburg nor Columbus fit. It does seem clear that Gridley is in the northeastern part of the country, at least.

A well-known family, apparently from New Jersey, is that of Fenton Hardy, famous detective. The "Hardy Boys" (Dixon) "lived in Bayport, a city of about fifty thousand inhabitants, located on Barmet Bay, three miles in from the Atlantic..." ("The Tower Treasure," p. 2.) Intern-

al evidence is conflicting here also, and New Jersey, Long Island and Connecticut are all indicated at various times. In "The Secret of the Old Mill," however, "The afternoon express from the North steamed into the Bayport station..." where the Hardy boys were waiting to meet their father, "who had been away... on a murder case in New York." (p. 1.) New Jersey seems pretty definite. (To be continued)

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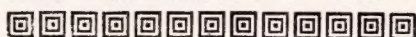
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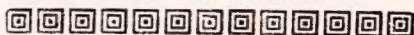
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## DISPLAYING YOUR COLLECTION

by Jack R. Schorr

If you would like to share your collection with the community, put some of it on display.

Contact some of the building and loan associations in your area and make arrangements to display your books and dime novels in their windows. There will be details to work out, such as liability insurance against theft and fire and damage. You will or should want to do the window arranging yourself.

Purchase some very inexpensive wire book racks, which can be used for your hard back or dime novels. You can make your own with thin ply wood and 2-inch strip at one end to raise the book up. There should be some sort of advertisement, such as a placard with your name and address on it. You could call it "Books your Grandparents used to read," displayed by John Jones, 1850 Elm St., Centerville, Collector of boys' books.

This will give you lots of advertising, and you will get a lot of leads, and quite a few calls from people who have their children's—long since grown up—books in the attic or basement. These are the kinds of leads you want.

My suggestion is to have some good duplicates to display and not to risk your only ones. This will relieve you of the anxiety of theft and sun damage to the only copy you have. Insurance pays off, but doesn't find you the book that's stolen or damaged. Be sure you display nice copies and sharp clear non-brittle dime novels. This reflects the kind of collection you have. Pick out several each of the better known series, like the Rover Boys, "Tom Swifts," "Tip Tops," "Wild West Weekly" and, of course, some Algers, and display them. The lesser known series will not be recognized. It's when an adult sees a book or series that he used to read, that's when the interest is generated.

A friend of mine back east got three men and a woman on the road to collecting, through his excellent

display. He sold them duplicates to get started, and he wasn't unhappy about it. I would like to see our hobby carried on and not die out with us. It's okay for it to end up in some library, but it's more fun in the hands of a private collector.

The above friend displayed some girls' books along with his boys' books which was a good idea. He had some Elsie Dinsmore, Little Colonel Series, Dorothy Dales, Outdoor Girls, along with his others. This widens the field of interest, because girls were avid readers. Girls' books can still be purchased for 25c to 50c each. Reminds one of the prices of the boys' books in 1940. You will usually find these in better shape than boys' books, and if you are going to display, by all means include a few for interest's sake. These displays can be set up once a year, and in nearby surrounding towns. You will be surprised how much interest it creates. Set up a small display at swap meets and sell some duplicates. A friend of mine collects only the series by Grosset and Dunlap with the Boy Scout Emblem on them, the Every Boy Library. He displays these at all Boy Scout activities. He is a scout master for a handicapped boys troop. His display is in a glass-covered case to prevent handling, and makes an interesting set up.

It really doesn't take much time to set up a display in a window, about an hour, and once it is set up you can leave it. One sure way to perpetuate our hobby is to create an interest in it. So fellows, let's put on a few displays in our area. You may get a phone call asking you how to get started. And think of the duplicates you can get rid of!

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## RECENTLY PUBLISHED ARTICLES CONCERNING DIME NOVELS

**REAL WEST ANNUAL 1971.** Charlton Publications, Derby, Conn. 06418. 75c. **THE JAMES BOYS IN DIME NOVELS.** A three-page pictorial illustrating most of the dime novel series that feature stories about the James Boys. Included are numerous illustrations of the various "true" accounts of the James Boys published in paper back format.

**YANKEE, May 1971.** Yankee, Inc. Dublin, New Hampshire 03444. 50c. **SO WHO WROTE POPPY OTT AND THE PEDIGREED PICKLE?** by Charles J. Jordan with photographs by Ray Bates. A well written but uninformed article about the series boys books. There is more misinformation per page than in most articles on the subject published in commercial publications. The writer evidently has not been exposed to the Roundup or the Boys Book Collector. Photographs were nice.

**YESTERDAY, May 1971.** Edgar R. Jones, 75 Market Square, Newington, Conn. 06111. **THE REAL BUFFALO BILL.** Reprinted from the LITERARY DIGEST for January 1917. Mention is made of Ned Buntline and a number of weekly publications remembered by the author. Good article for Buffalo Bill fans. Information and magazine sent in by Edwin Sommers. Yesterday is published monthly and features articles and ads from magazines of the 1890's through the 1920's.

## EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Ed: The Factory Life Library,

cover was certainly one of the most fascinating dime novel items I ever saw. Sam Moskowitz.

Dear Eddie: If you ever hear of anyone who is interested in buying or selling old comics, I'm always in the market. Despite my comic collecting, I'm still a staunch Merriwell fan. Dick Hoffman, 1868 Linwood Ave., Niagara Falls, N. Y. 14305.

## NEWS NOTES

Dr. John T. Dizer, Jr., author of our feature article this month and long-time member of the Dime Novel Roundup, spoke on May 5th in the Otto Meyer Room of Mountain Elms in Utica, New York, on "Tom Swift and His Friends." A professor and head of the Mechanical Technology Department at Mohawk Valley Community College, John discussed the influence of dime novels, series books and all types of juvenile literature on youthful attitudes toward scientific inventions, sports, and the "American Dream." His collection numbers well over 3,000 copies. Selected copies were on display in the Oneida County Historical Society rooms immediately after the program.

**Back numbers, Reckless Ralph's Dime Novel Roundup Nos. 1 to 237 inclusive.** A number of reprints in the lower numbers (can't be helped). Also two indexes, novel catalogue, birthday number and the one number published of Pioneer and Scouts of the Old West. Single issues, 10c each.

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### JOHN T. MCINTYRE

The Young Continentals at Bunker Hill (Penn)

The Young Continentals at Monmouth (Penn)

In Kentucky with Daniel Boone

In the Rockies with Kit Carson

On the Border with Andrew Jackson

Ashton Kirk, Investigator

Ashton Kirk, Secret Agent

Ashton Kirk, Special Detective

Ashton Kirk, Criminologist

The Boy Tars of 1812

Fighting King George

With John Paul Jones

With Fighting Jack Barry

### W. GORDON PARKER

Grant Burton, the Runaway (LL&S)

### ASHTON LAMAR

When Scout Meets Scout

On the Edge of the Arctic

### JAMES OTIS

The Minute Boys of the Wyoming Valley

The Minute Boys of South Carolina

At the Defense of Fort Henry

With the Regulators

With Grant at Vicksburg

The Cruise of the Pickering

With Perry on Lake Erie

With Preble at Tripoli

Capt. Tom, the Privateersman

When Israel Putnam Served the King

The Boys of Fort Schuyler

Larry Hudson's Ambition

The Charming Sally

Joel Hartford

Wood Island Light (Bradley)

Wheeling for Fortune

### D. LANGE

The Sioux Runner

The Gold Rock of the Chippewa

The Boast of the Seminole

(See previous Roundup issues for other titles wanted)